



Southeast Alaska Conservation Council

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February 13, 2004

Local consultation process
 Division of Program Development
 DOT&PF
 3132 Channel Drive Room 200
 Juneau, AK 99801
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To Whom It May Concern:

These comments are submitted by the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council on the draft Non-Metropolitan Local Official Consultation Process.

SEACC is a coalition of eighteen volunteer citizen conservation groups in fourteen communities across Southeast Alaska. Our member groups and many of our members are residents of rural communities and non-metropolitan areas ranging from Ketchikan to Yakutat. SEACC is dedicated to safeguarding the integrity of Southeast Alaska's unsurpassed natural environment, while providing for balanced, sustainable use of our region's resources.

In addition to updating local officials on changes to the Statewide Transportation Plan (STP) and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), the state should also provide an analysis of how the update impacts each community. For example the state should clearly let each community know if a project of concern is gaining or losing funding and if it has moved up or down in the list of priorities. As the STIP is presented right now, it is extremely difficult to decipher the changes and progress of projects of concern to communities. Smaller communities often lack the capability to perform the full analysis that serves as the basis for meaningful comments.

While it is helpful for communities to have contact people, DOT&PF should be cautious of not depending on this person to keep the community informed about various projects. Rather, DOT&PF should make an extensive effort to inform all community members about projects. In rural communities in particular, the local government is often run by volunteers and part time employees. Involving all community members will help local officials and DOT&PF make better decisions.

DOT&PF notes that it will "review and consider resolutions, plans, and project priorities of local governments," but the weight of these concerns is unclear. Does "review and

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 CLAY & TRADITIONAL GATHERING COUNCIL OF KAKE • FRIENDS OF BERNERS BAY, Juneau • FRIENDS OF GLACIER BAY, Gustavus • JUNEAU AUDUBON SOCIETY
 JUNEAU GROUP SIERRA CLUB • LOWER CHATHAM CONSERVATION SOCIETY, Port Alexander • LYNN CANAL CONSERVATION, Haines • NARROWS CONSERVATION
 COALITION, Petersburg • LISIANSKI INLET RESOURCE COUNCIL, Pelican • PRINCE OF WALES CONSERVATION LEAGUE, Craig • SITKA CONSERVATION SOCIETY
 TONGASS CONSERVATION SOCIETY, Ketchikan • TAKU CONSERVATION SOCIETY, Juneau • WRANGELL RESOURCE COUNCIL • YAKUTAT RESOURCE CONSERVATION COUNCIL

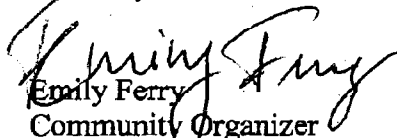
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consider" simply mean that documents will be read or does it mean that they will significantly impact project planning? We believe that the concerns of the community should take precedence when considering and prioritizing projects. If DOT&PF makes a decision contrary to popular sentiment, the agency should provide the community with a clear, written explanation of the decision.

And finally, DOT&PF should strive for a collaborative brainstorming process with local citizens. Rather than approaching communities with fully-formed proposals that have already consumed hundreds of hours of staff time, DOT&PF should begin conversations with communities before any planning is initiated to foster a collaborative process that grows out of community needs and not DOT&PF office space.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Emily Ferry".

Emily Ferry
Community Organizer
Southeast Alaska Conservation Council